

Community-shaped approaches to promote adherence to COVID-19 health protective behaviour and vaccine uptake

Introduction

A collaborative project conducted from January to July 2021 between Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Community Development Action (CDA). The aim of the project was to increase adherence to COVID-19 health protective behaviours and vaccine uptake during the pandemic. This was achieved through dissemination of correct public health messages in a format appropriate to specific ethnic minority communities and socially marginalized groups by COVID information Champions (CICs). CICs were respected community leaders who these groups trusted.

Communication Channels

CHH radio station	Weekly podcast
Social media	WhatsApp group
Videos in different languages	Website
Social organisations and clubs	Healthy Hubs



Approach

Qualitative focus groups

- Three focus groups with twenty four CICs from diverse communities and faith groups.

Thematic analysis

- Focus group data were analysed using a thematic analytical approach on NVIVO 12.

Findings

Gap in diversified and focused messaging targeting different audiences

"... perhaps the format of the email is getting a bit tired, and it is a bit samey, but they're trying to just push home the same standard approach each time with the extra little bits in yellow. We are producing these little, they're called postcards which you can use for Facebook and Twitter... so we can put out specific information from that main email list and get it out to you in those postcard forms... "

Tim, CIC, East Hertfordshire

"...one of the ways that I try to get messaging through, is through our local organisations who then cascade onto their members through their meetings and so on and so Women's Institute and Training Association, Village Core Groups, Football Club etc, so that's kind of the way of communicating..."

Joseph, CIC, East Hertfordshire, and Broxbourne

Low trust in information from public authorities

"We have quite a substantial community in Letchworth and Hitchin who are Punjabi speaking and I'm not really sure...it's kind of getting there. Part of the feedback I've had with myself doing this information champion thing is that people are hesitant to take this information onboard from an official body like Herts County Council and would rather see it from somebody they know. So, it's like they know that this person is like their friend or they've seen them in their community and it's not like being imposed on them..."

Tasha, CIC, North Herts, and Stevenage

It's a bit too impersonal and I think if people could see real people who've had the vaccine, I think that speaks to the general population far more, especially if it's somebody who has an underlying health condition, if it's somebody in the care sector or if it's somebody... you know, pick the niche groups, and actually let them tell the story. I think that would be far more powerful a message whether it's in the postcard form or short videos.

Mandy, CIC, Welwyn Hatfield

Key findings

- ❑ Community-shaped approaches applied via CICs built trust and credibility in ethnic minority communities and socially marginalized groups and increased adherence in health protective behaviour and vaccine uptake.
- ❑ Low trust in information that came from public authorities in some racialised communities and socially marginalised groups. This could be attributed to the inequalities these communities were experiencing prior to the emergence of the pandemic due to the little understanding public authorities had of their lives.

Conclusions

Social and cultural structures play a critical role in shaping world views and beliefs that influenced adherence to COVID-19 health protective behaviours and vaccine uptake in Hertfordshire

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